

new plan earlier this month in Texas. He said 80 percent of the deaths in a given year happen between May and August.

The government has also increased staffing of Border Patrol Search Trauma and Rescue Units, called Borstar, which deploys emergency medical technicians like Mr. Stroud, to assist people found in desperate condition in the desert.

The publicity campaign seems to have had little effect, say border agents and illegal immigrants.

Ramirez Bermúdez, 26, walked for four days in 100-degree heat, and said he knew full well what he was getting into. He had been caught four times before his apprehension this week, he said.

Though he has a 25-acre farm in southern Mexico, Mr. Bermúdez said he could earn up to \$200 a day picking cherries in California. He was distressed, though, at getting caught and at the failure to meet a coyote, or smuggler, who had agreed to pick him up and members of his group for \$1,200 each.

Mr. Stroud has developed a ritual to cope with the increased number of bodies he has seen among the mesquite bushes and barrel cactus of the Sonoran. He has seen children as young as 10, their bodies bloated after decomposing in the heat, and mothers wailing next to them.

"I say a little prayer for every body," he said. "You try not to let it get to you. But every one of these bodies is somebody's son or daughter, somebody's mother or father."

[From the Washington Times, May 18, 2004]

#### STEALTH AMNESTY

(By Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.)

The issue that has the potential to be the most volatile politically in the 2004 election is not Iraq, the economy or same-sex marriages. At this writing, it would appear to be the wildly unpopular idea of granting illegal aliens what amounts to amnesty—the opportunity to stay in this country, work, secure social services, become citizens and, in some jurisdictions, perhaps vote even prior to becoming citizens.

So radioactive is this idea across party, demographic, class and geographic lines that President Bush has wisely decided effectively to shelve the immigration reform plan he announced with much fanfare earlier this year. With the lowest job approval ratings of his presidency, the last thing he needs is a legislative brawl that will at best fracture, and at worst massively alienate his base.

It appears unlikely to help him much with Americans of other stripes, either. Significant numbers of independents and Democrats (although, to be sure, not John Kerry's left-wing constituency)—even Hispanic ones—feel as conservative Republicans do: Rewarding those who violate our immigration statutes is corrosive to the rule of law, on net detrimental to our economy and a serious national security vulnerability.

Unfortunately for Mr. Bush, one of his most loyal friends in the U.S. Senate, Republican conservative Larry Craig of Idaho, is poised to saddle the president's re-election bid with just such a divisive initiative: S. 1645, the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act of 2003 (better known as the AgJobs bill). AgJobs is, in some ways, even worse than the president's plan for temporary workers. While most experts disagree, at least Mr. Bush insists that his initiative will not amount to amnesty for illegal aliens.

No such demurrals are possible about S. 1645. By the legislation's own terms, an illegal alien will be turned into "an alien lawfully admitted for temporary residence," provided they had managed to work unlawfully in an agricultural job in the United States for a

minimum of 100 hours—in other words, for just 2½ workweeks—during the 18 months prior to August 31, 2003.

Once so transformed, they can stay in the U.S. indefinitely while applying for permanent resident status. From there, it is a matter of time before they can become citizens, so long as they work in the agricultural sector for 675 hours over the next six years.

The Craig bill would confer this amnesty not only on farmworking illegal aliens who are in this country—estimates of those eligible run to more than 800,000. It would also extend the opportunity to those who otherwise qualified but had previously left the United States. No one knows how many would fall in this category and want to return as legal workers. But, a safe bet is that there are hundreds of thousands of them.

If any were needed, S. 1645 offers a further incentive to the illegals: Your family can stay, as well. Alternatively, if they are not with you, you can bring them in, too—cutting in line ahead of others who made the mistake of abiding by, rather than ignoring, our laws. And just in case the illegal aliens are daunted by the prospect of filling out such paperwork as would be required to effect the changes in status authorized by the AgJobs bill, S. 1645 offers still more: free counsel from, ironically, the bane of conservatives like Sen. Larry Craig and many of his Republican co-sponsors—the highly controversial, leftist and taxpayer-underwritten Legal Services Corp.

Needless to say, such provisions seem unlikely to be well-received by the majority of law-abiding Americans. Nor, for that matter, do they appear to have much prospect of passage in the less-self-destructive House of Representatives.

Yet, if Mr. Craig presses for action on his legislation, the Senate leadership might be unable to spare either President Bush or itself the predictable blow-back: As of today, the Senate Web site indicates the Idahoan has 61 cosponsors, two more than are needed to cut off debate and bring the legislation to a vote; 11 more than would be needed for its passage.

In short, thanks to intense pressure from an unusual coalition forged by the agricultural industry and illegal alien advocacy groups, the Senate might endorse the sort of election altering initiative that precipitates voter response—like that made famous by the movie "Network News": "I am mad as hell and I am not going to take it anymore." Some, perhaps including the normally shrewd Mr. Craig, may calculate that such voters will have nowhere to go if the alternative to Republican control of the White House and Senate would be Democrats who are, if anything, even less responsible when it comes to amnesty (and social services, voting rights, etc.) for illegal aliens.

The truth of the matter, though—as President Bush's political operatives apparently concluded after they trotted out their amnesty-light initiative last January—is voters don't have to vote Democratic to change Washington's political line-up. They just have to stay home on Election Day. And S. 1645 could give them powerful reason to do so.

[From the New York Times, March 22, 2004]

#### IN FLORIDA GROVES, CHEAP LABOR MEANS MACHINES

(By Eduardo Porter)

IMMOKALEE, FLA.—Chugging down a row of trees, the pair of canopy shakers in Paul Meador's orange grove here seem like a cross between a bulldozer and a hairbrush, their hungry steel bristles working through the tree crowns as if untangling colossal heads of hair.

In under 15 minutes, the machines shake loose 36,000 pounds of oranges from 100 trees, catch the fruit and drop it into a large storage car. "This would have taken four pickers all day long," Mr. Meador said.

Canopy shakers are still an unusual sight in Florida's orange groves. Most of the crop is harvested by hand, mainly by illegal Mexican immigrants. Nylon sacks slung across their backs, perched atop 16-foot ladders, they pluck oranges at a rate of 70 to 90 cents per 90-pound box, or less than \$75 a day.

But as globalization creeps into the groves, it is threatening to displace the workers. Facing increased competition from Brazil and a glut of oranges on world markets, alarmed growers here have been turning to labor-saving technology as their best hope for survival.

"The Florida industry has to reduce costs to stay in business," said Everett Loukonen, agribusiness manager for the Barron Collier Company, which uses shakers to harvest about half of the 40.5 million pounds of oranges reaped annually from its 10,000 acres in southwestern Florida. "Mechanical harvesting is the only available way to do that today."

Global competition is pressing American farmers on many fronts. American raisins are facing competition from Chile and Turkey. For fresh tomatoes, the challenge comes from Mexico. China, whose Fuji apples have displaced Washington's Golden Delicious from most Asian markets—and whose apple juice has swamped the United States—is cutting into American farmers' markets for garlic, broccoli and a host of other crops.

So even while President Bush advances a plan to invite legal guest workers into American fields, farmers for the first time in a generation are working to replace hand laborers with machines.

"The rest of the world hand-picks everything, but their wage rates are a fraction of ours," said Galen Brown, who led the mechanical harvesting program at the Florida Department of Citrus until his retirement last year. Lee Simpson, a raisin grape grower in California's San Joaquin Valley, is more blunt. "The cheap labor," he said, "isn't cheap enough."

Mr. Simpson and other growers have devised a system that increases yields and cuts the demand for workers during the peak harvest time by 90 percent; rather than cutting grapes by hand and laying them out to dry, the farmers let the fruit dry on the vine before it is harvested mechanically.

Some fruit-tree growers in Washington State have introduced a machine that knocks cherries off the tree onto a conveyor belt; they are trying to perfect a similar system for apples. Strawberry growers in Ventura County, Calif., developed a mobile conveyor belt to move full strawberry boxes from the fields to storage bins, cutting demand for workers by a third. And producers of leaf lettuce and spinach for bag mixes have introduced mechanical cutters.

American farmers have been dragging machines into their fields at least since the mid-19th century, when labor shortages during the Civil War drove a first wave of mechanical harvesting. Mechanization grew apace for the following 100-plus years, taking over the harvesting of crops including wheat, corn, cotton and sugar cane.

But not all crops were easily adaptable to machines. Whole fruit and vegetables—the most lucrative and labor intensive crops, employing four of every five seasonal field workers—require delicate handling. Mechanization sometimes meant rearranging the fields, planting new types of vines or trees and retrofitting packing plants.

Rather than make such investments, farmers mostly focused on lobbying government